

Brand Engagement and Brand Personality an Empirical Study of Customer Behavior at “Kidzania” theme Park



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A consumer brand's personality generates engagement with the brand. There is little empirical evidence to support it for theme parks. A study conducted on kids who frequented Kidzania the Entertainment Zone for children shows that indeed personality dimensions do seem to affect their engagement with the brand. The dimension of brand personality studied were Sincerity Excitement Competence Sophistication and Ruggedness. The consumer brand engagement was assessed at three levels Affective Cognitive and Active. The children viewed Kidzania as a meaningful and didactic brand which also made them do responsible things and act as adults.

Keywords: Brand Engagement, Brand Personality, Kidzania, Brand Promotions, Theme Park

1. Introduction

Kids have been increasingly gaining the marketers attention not just as a consumer but also as influencers. The last decade has also seen a surge in focus on kids in traditional advertising, reality shows, daily soaps, and recently even in the internet entertainment platforms like web series to garner better viewership. Market research giant Kantar IMRB have conducted a nationwide study named Kid Scan with a sample of 2,500 children aged 5-14 across 3 socio-economic classes in over 1 million towns in India. 62 per cent of the Kids feel that TV is not only for entertainment but also a source of information, 36 per cent of the kids claims to definitely go and buy the product because they felt that the ad was nice (Kantar IMRB, 2017). The current generation kids are assertive, brand conscious and actively engaged consumer.

The present study is based on such a brand which treats kids as if they were adults. Kidzania is a distinctive entertainment theme park meant for kids. Kidzania is a safe, unique, and interactive indoor theme park that empowers, inspires & educates kids through real-life role-play activities. This study aims to assess the relationship between the brand personality of Kidzania and the level of consumer brand engagement experienced by the kids.

2. Literature Review

The paper begins by reviewing the literature on brand personality and consumer engagement. It then discusses the methodology and main findings of a survey administered to a sample of 200 children in the suburbs of Mumbai. The findings are discussed in the light of the previous literature highlighting implications for practitioners and suggestions are made for further research.

Brand Personality Describes Brands in Terms of Human-Like Characteristics

Brand personality of Kidzania is seen as a valuable factor in increasing brand engagement and brand attachment, in much the same way as people relate and bind to other people. Just like people, all brands have a personality. Many have more than one personality – depending on the situation and the specific market. Understanding and accordingly developing this personality is very important. To market effectively, Kidzania needs a compelling brand personality – a brand image and brand voice.

Brand personality is intangible and exists in a subjective emotional realm. A recognizable and well-defined brand personality is a key part of a successful brand's appeal. As brands become more familiar to customers, they tend to take on these human qualities and characteristics. The brand personality of Kidzania will come through even if you don't intend for it to. It pays to develop a well thought-out brand personality – description of the Kidzania brand as part of the brand-development strategy.

Personality is often used interchangeably with terms like brand character. Generally, it's expressed in personal or character terms such as, is Kidzania trustworthy, energetic, assertive, unpretentious, arrogant, friendly, helpful, and so on. Personality comes from many cues around the brand experience. Ultimately, nearly every interaction (touch points) with a customer or prospect shapes the brand personality.

Implementing a Brand Personality Strategy

There are three steps to implementing a brand personality strategy:

- 1 Researching the symbolic associations that currently exist in the kids entertainment zone and competing brands,
- 2 Deciding which brand personality is going to be of greatest value with the target consumer segment, viz., the kids and
- 3 Executing the desired brand personality strategy (creating, enhancing, or modifying the brand's personality).

Researching Brand Personality

There are various ways to learn about the brand personalities that consumers associate with the brand Kidzania in the entertainment theme parks category. Some are more direct and quantitative, while others are more indirect and qualitative. Among the quantitative techniques available, perhaps the simplest is to have consumers rate Kidzania, and/or users of this brand, on various personality adjectives. Thus a consumer might rate the brand, as being relatively high on scales for the adjectives of being competitive, aggressive, and so on. Different brands in a product category are then be “profiled” (compared) on these personality adjective scales.

While easy to do, a method of using scaling and adjectives suffers from at least two disadvantages: the list of specific personality scales used might be incomplete (or some of them might be irrelevant), and consumers may be unable or unwilling to give their true opinions about a brand’s personality through such “direct” elicitation techniques. The qualitative, projective techniques attempt to get over this second limitation. The hope is that they will be more able to get at some of these “unconscious” (or difficult-to-articulate) personality perceptions that a consumer may have about a brand.

Deciding and Targeting a Brand Personality

The personality scale ratings or associations obtained through marketing research can now be compared to the target consumer’s ratings of his or her own personality, both actual and aspired-to, and inferences can be drawn on which aspects of a brand’s personality need to be reinforced or changed through advertising.

“Core brand elements for the KidZania brand are a unique and differentiated proposition, immersive environments, authenticity and quality that are achieved through attention to detail combined with the customer experience.”(Rihannon Hulse 13 May, 2014).

The process of selecting a “target” brand personality requires a good sense of judgment, for one must choose a personality that corresponds to the “ideal” personality for a brand in that category, given the relevant use-setting and context, keeping in mind the personality strengths and weaknesses of competitive brands. It also goes without saying that the targeted personality must be consistent with the functional or psychological benefit that the brand is promising. In this judgmental process it is often useful first to create a detailed target market profile

KidZania acknowledged that role playing, considered as a universal form of play and development for kids all over the world, should be included in the entertainment experience. It also customized the concept for cultural differences in global locations ESP India. It has also acknowledged that in order to minimize capital investment, it worked with a powerhouse partner and attracted secure sponsors, and educators in order to grow brand recognition, expand locations and become a recognized destination for school visits.

The value of a brand lies in experience and consistency and these things are particularly important for a global franchise brand such as KidZania. To achieve this, a series of programs were implemented to develop personnel through consistent training, establishing quality standards, collecting data to improve best practices and building CSR into the brand’s core DNA.

Executing a Brand Personality Strategy

Once the brand personality has been researched and targeted, advertising that creates, reinforces, or changes that target personality has been done by “Kidzania “. It is important to note that every element of the marketing and communication mix plays a role-especially packaging, pricing, sales promotions, and distribution. Key advertising elements that contribute to a brand’s personality are the following:

Image associated with Real People

The choice of a real person (or persons) to be associated with the image of this Kidzania brand is important, because the image of the people involved (kids) can get transferred to the brand with enough repetition. The image does not have to be even human.

User Imagery

The kind of imagery user portrayed in the promotional material and on the website also proved to be very important for the creation of a personality reference.

Executional Elements

Elements such as the choice of music, visual elements, pace and nature of editing, color schemes used, layout, and typography all contributed substantially to the brand’s personality of “Kidzania”. This can be seen on line as well as offline also.

Consistency

Predictability and consistency in advertising is very important in executing a brand personality strategy. A brand personality can only develop successfully if the important symbolic aspects of the brand-such as those just described-remain consistent over time. Brands that change these elements risk diluting their personalities, or end up having no brand personality at all. Other marketing elements communicate brand personality as well. Decisions about other marketing elements-especially pricing, promotions, and distribution-must always support and reinforce a brand’s basic personality, not reduce its character.

The following Questions come to mind while developing brand personality

1. How would you prefer the Kidzania your brand is seen by the people?
2. How do I want my clients to see Kidzania, my favorite brand?

Brand Management and Consumer Engagement

Both companies and consumers find branding important, but for different, complementary reasons. For individual firms, according to Kotler (2000, p. 408), brands facilitate order processing and tracking, give legal protection to unique product features, make product extensions easy, and target different markets. Moreover, managers use brand strategies to accomplish five related goals: (1) to distinguish their offering from those provided by their competitors and also to prevent it from being a commodity, (2) to give the product an image or personality, (3) to give the brand an identity, (4) to enhance the company's image and reputation, and (5) to facilitate relationships with consumers that lead to long term value.

When these goals are accomplished successfully and consumers connect with brands as an extension of themselves (Malar et al., 2011) they accumulate equity. Brand equity can be thought of as the marketing and financial value of a brand to the company arising from consumer awareness, their loyalty, quality perceptions, and other associations (Aaker, 1991, p. 17; Ferrell & Hartline, 2005, p. 177). Equity in turn leads to long run profitability and consumer advocacy of the brand to others. Consumers contribute to the success of brand strategy and brand equity because brands are important to them. First, consumers use brands to distinguish a company's offering from those of other companies; (2) this information allows them to make efficient judgments of quality, suitability, value and can prompt quick purchase; (3) consumers use brands to create and display self-image and identity; (4) consumers can interact with the brand and even co-create it; (5) consumers form relationships with the brand and consequently the company that they find satisfying; (6) brand help consumers establish and maintain social relationships (see Haugtvedt, Herr, & Kardes, 2008; Maehle, Otnes, & Supphellen, 2011; Walker, 2009). At the heart of the process by which managers create brand strategies and consumers participate in them, yielding a brand identity, brand equity, long term relationships, and perhaps brand advocacy, is the interaction of the brand's personality and the consumer's engagement with it (Goldsmith, 2011). Although how consumers invest brands with human-like characteristics is understood (Maehle et al., 2011), empirical links between brand personality and consumer brand engagement are few. It is important to show that the effort invested by managers and consumers into brand personality leads to the greater brand engagement that both parties desire.

Consumer Engagement

The engagement concept finds a lot of takers in various scientific disciplines including organizational behavior, psychology, sociology and political sciences. Numerous engagement forms (e.g. engagement of employees, civic engagement, consumer engagement etc.) determined the variety of interpretations of the concept.

Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, Ilic (2011) studied engagement concept constructs in social sciences. Brodie et al. (2011) emphasize that engagement is a form of social and interactive behavior which can be defined as a transitive state developed through the time in the relevant engagement processes. The terms "engage" and "engagement" usually are used in the discussions concerning co creation, development of decisions and interaction.

According to Hollebeek (2011a), engagement is contextually oriented, and it can be influenced by consumers decision related to particular engagement objects, e.g. brands, products or organizations. The studies of consumer engagement also are related to deeper analysis of consumer engagement causes. Javornik, Mandelli (2013) performed the significant study in terms of the development of the consumer engagement concept and identification of research perspectives.

First of all, authors performed a thorough analysis of existing consumer engagement literature (Brodie et al., 2011; Gambetti, Graffigna, 2010; Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011b; Vivek, Beatty, Morgan, 2012). Secondly, according to the results of the analysis, Javornik, Mandelli (2013) suggested four research perspectives of consumer engagement: behavioral, psychological, social and multidimensional. The last mentioned perspective has been comprehensively analyzed by Brodie, Hollebeek, Juric, Ilic (2011), Hollebeek (2011a, 2011b), Hollebeek, Glynn, Brodie (2014). According to Javornik and Mandelli (2013), based on the generalization of consumer engagement dimensionality researches, the number of dimensions is defined by the perspective of consumer engagement (is it considered to be unidimensional or multidimensional construct). Moreover, the definition of dimensions depends on the object of engagement (e.g. brand, brand community, advertisement, online social platform, website etc.). In the case of both perspectives, there is no consensus on which and what dimensions should be included in the concept of consumer engagement. In the case of first perspective, (unidimensional view to engagement) one dimension is identified as the dominant one. Usually, different researchers identify different dimensions. According to Hollebeek (2011a), Guthrie, Cox (2001) emphasized the importance of cognitive dimension, whereas Catteeuw et al. (2007) claimed emotional dimension, and Pomerantz (2006) – behavioral dimension to be the most significant one. It is necessary to note that there are also no consensus in the researches of a multidimensional perspective.

The very first studies of consumer engagement dimensionality were performed in 2005-2006. Patterson, Yu, De Ruyter (2006) stated that the main dimensions of consumer engagement are absorption, dedication, vigor, and interaction. Authors argued that the consumer must be focused on the engagement object, enthusiastic, determined to devote energy and to interact with the object of engagement. Vivek (2009) agreed that consumer engagement is a multidimensional construct – researcher performed a qualitative study in order to classify attributes of the engagement construct. According to the results of this study, Vivek (2009) identified five conceptual consumer engagement dimensions

1. **Awareness** – Being conscious of and having knowledge of the focus of engagement i.e. object of engagement;

2. **Enthusiasm** – Strong excitement about the object of engagement;
3. **Interaction** – interchange of ideas, thoughts, feelings about the object of engagement with others;
4. **Activity** – Actions focused on the program or offering the person is engaged in; Rita Kuvykaitė and Asta Tarutė / Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 213 (2015)
5. **Extraordinary Experience** – sense of newness of perception and process.

It is worth to note that consumer engagement dimensions identified by Patterson et al. (2006) and Vivek (2009) are similar in main aspects: consumer’s focus, enthusiasm, willingness to act and interact. Moreover, Hollebeek et al. (2014) suggest that the term “engagement” defines a multidimensional concept that consists of three dimensions: cognitive, affective and active. Researchers also emphasize that different dimensions of consumer engagement are interrelated. Brodie, Ilic, Juric, Hollebeek (2013) identified that affective engagement may cause an increase of intensity level of other (cognitive and active) dimensions. Hollebeek (2011a, b), Hollebeek et al. (2014) analyzed previous studies on the characteristics and common expressions of consumer engagement dimensions. The main result of this analysis was a classification of consumer engagement dimensions to the most commonly identified cognitive, affective and active dimensions

6. **Cognitive Dimension** - A consumer's level of engagement object related thought processing, concentration and interest in specific object (business enterprise, brand, online social network, brand community);
7. **Affective Dimension** – A state of emotional activity also known as the feeling of inspiration or pride related to and caused by engagement object;
8. **Active Dimension** – A state of consumer behavior related to engagement object and understood as endeavor and energy given for an interaction.

Hollebeek (2011a) illustrates a cognitive consumer engagement dimension by the examples related to brand activities, for example, when consumer focuses on or shows a great interest in the brand. In recent studies, Hollebeek et al. (2014) identify the dimension of “cognitive processing”. This dimension is defined as “a consumer's level of brand-related thought processing and elaboration in a particular consumer/brand interaction”.

Based on this interpretation dimension of “cognitive processing” can be referred to “traditional” cognitive dimension. Moreover, Abdul-Ghani, Hyde, Marshall (2011) identified “utilitarian” (in their study researchers identified three engagement dimensions: utilitarian, hedonic and social) and Patterson's et al. (2006) „vigor” dimensions also can be approached as cognitive dimension of consumer engagement. „Utilitarian” dimension is reasoned by consumer’s evaluation of the utility and advantages of the online auction website.

A dimension of “vigor” defines consumer’s level of mental flexibility and stability during the interaction with organization or brand, other consumers. This dimension also reflects consumer’s willingness to devote energy, time and endeavor for the participation in business activities. An emotional dimension of engagement can be argued by the statement of Heath (2007) that engagement is described as a subconscious emotional construct. The term “emotion” defines any stimulation of feelings. Abdul Ghani et al. (2011) identifies hedonic dimension of engagement that also can be expressed by consumer’s experienced pleasure while using online auction sites – it is stated that consumer engaged in the activities of such websites experience a pleasure, i.e. positive emotions.

In the scientific researches whereas the object of engagement is a particular brand, emotional dimension is expressed by “dedication” (Cheung, Lee, & Jin, 2011; Patterson et al., 2006) or “affection” (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Patterson et al. (2006) states that “dedication” refers to “the consumer’s sense of belonging as a consumer - the consumer is proud of the firm they patronize and is enthusiastic and passionate to play its role”. According to Hollebeek et al. (2014) emotional dimension of engagement also can be expressed as consumer’s attachment, i.e. positive feelings for a specific brand in particular consumer-brand interactions.

3. Research Framework and Methodology

On the basis of the variables discussed in the previous sections a conceptual framework explaining the relationship between them in the context of “Kidzania “is illustrated in Figure 1 below.

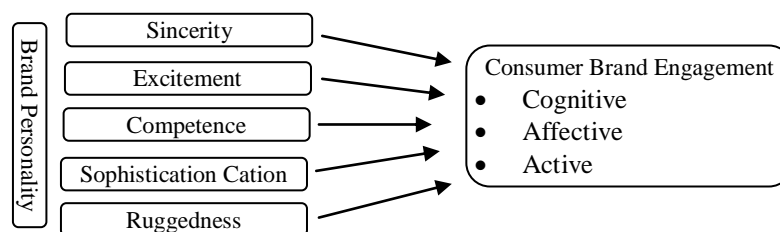


Figure 1 Source: Authors

Research Design: The authors have followed a path of descriptive research. The research design implemented to conduct the study was a market survey. A structured questionnaire (see appendix) was used to collect the data.

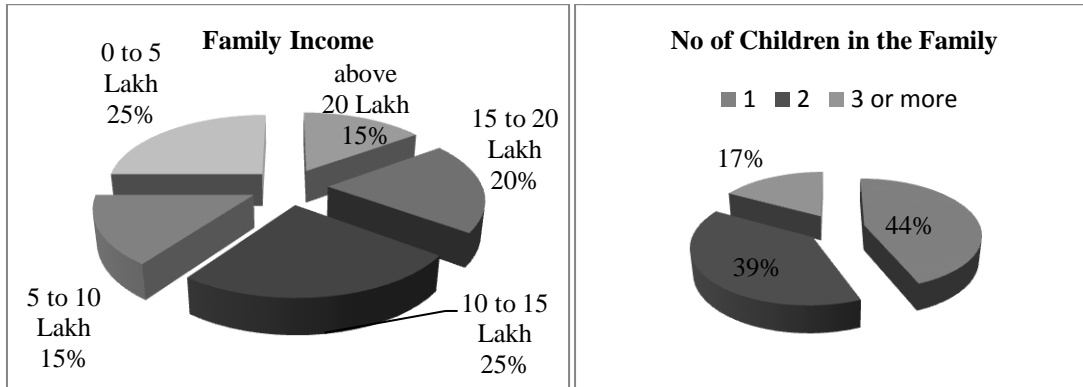
Sample Description: A sample of 200 households was contacted in and around the suburban areas of Mumbai. The end consumer is a kid in the present context. To ensure that the kids are able to understand the concepts asked in the questionnaire

they were surveyed along with their parent / guardian to facilitate the data collection. A total of 180 usable responses were subjected to data analysis.

Data Analysis: The authors were interested in studying the relationship between the brand personality and consumer brand engagement. Pearson’s correlation was used to study the extent of relationship between the two construct. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was used to study the cause and effect relation between them.

4. Data Analysis & Interpretation

The following charts illustrate the demographic distribution of the sample under study in terms of family income, occupation and the number of children in the family.



The reliability of the scales used is summarized in the table below. The reliability is calculated using Chronbach alpha. Table 1 illustrates the Cronbach’s Alpha values for the scales. In case of the present study, the alpha values ranged from of 0.709 to 0.873, which were above 0.60 and therefore in the range of acceptability as prescribed by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). The reliability score for cognitive engagement is 0.264 and hence the scale was not used in the further analysis.

Table 1 Summary of Cronbach’s Alpha Reliability Analysis (Full-scale study, n=180)

Scale	Number of items	Chronbach Alpha	Source
Sincerity	4	0.873	(Aker, 1997)
Excitement	4	0.847	
Competence	4	0.875	
Sophistication	3	0.854	
Ruggedness	2	0.709	
Affective	4	0.843	(Hollebeek, 2003)
Active	3	0.841	

Table 2 Summary of Step-Wise Multiple Linear Regression Output

Variables	Significant Values	Beta Values (β)	Adjusted R ² (Δ R ²)	Model Significance (F value)
Excitement	0.000	0.371	0.042	F value = 4.616 P value <0.011
Sincerity	0.001	-2.35		

As seen in the Table 2, multiple regressions analysis results led to emergence of sincerity and excitement (β=0.371, Δ R² = 0.042, p<0.01) as positive predictors of affective consumer engagement explaining a variance of 4.2%. The findings have been summarized in the below.

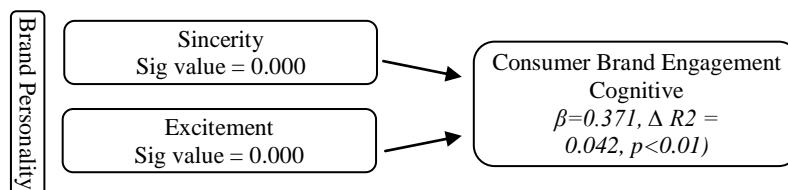


Figure 2 Authors

5. Discussions and Managerial Implication

As shown in the above quantitative analysis, this study tries to establish a connect between the personality of the “Kidzania” Brand and the engagement of children using this theme park’s entertainment on offer vis-a-vis various dimensions of excitement, sincerity, ruggedness etc. It is the ultimate in “Edutainment”, where the kids learn real skills from the occupations on offer from the moment they rush inside the park. Indeed, it may be argued that the biggest change in the children’s entertainment centre industry is the emergence of edutainment centers which promote hands-on discovery learning through free spontaneous play (White Hutchinson, 1998). MacBeath (2015) described it as the conviction that an enjoyable, challenging and learning experience would counter the more pessimistic view of learning which is simply hard work, slog and driven by others rather than by oneself. In India, this emergent trend is in conjunction with the new pedagogy wherein students are being weaned away from traditional, teacher-centered expository instruction towards student-centered experiential learning of one form or another. This trend helps in providing useful insights to the “Kidzania” sales and marketing team in terms of the marketing inputs and promotional tools to be used to market the various programs and entertainment activities for kids. The marketers can therefore use their current experiences with the current audiences to enhance the various offerings to be made for attracting more and diverse customers in the near future. They could extend their offerings to the adults and guardians accompanying the kids by providing them with shopping and other fruitful ways of engaging themselves while their kids enjoy themselves in the ‘real’ world activities provided by “Kidzania.”

6. Limitations and Future Scope of Research

The study was limited to customers of “Kidzania” at R. City mall in Central Mumbai, India. Also, since the study was directed at the kids (ages from 4 to 14) who were the actual consumers of “Kidzania” it is likely that their responses would not be very apt with regard to questions on brand engagement and customer connect. The sample size was also very small (about 200). This could well be responsible for some dimensions of brand personality linkages not getting captured adequately.

Also, the same brand study needs to be done in other locations of “Kidzania” in India and abroad. Future studies could explore the possibilities of establishing the linkages of brand personality with the competence, sophistication and ruggedness dimensions.

There is also scope to study children's facility appearing in many centers and clubs. Unlike the child-care, these children's facilities are considered significant revenue producers and are designed to attract an entirely new customer base. They are called children's entertainment or pay-for-play centers. Sometimes they are marketed as children's edutainment centers when they are predominately based on children learning through play. Examples include ‘Discovery Zone’, ‘Jungle Jim's Play land’ and ‘Explorations’ in the US or the Country Club in India. More CECs are independently owned than are part of a chain.

Another area which can be studied is the responses of three key groups: (1) industry partners, (2) think tank members, (3) head teachers/teachers whose schools had attended Kidzania and (4) Supervisors, the adult supervisors that facilitate the different role play activities at Kidzania.

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